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Critical Communication Pedagogy and its Relationship to Time, Labor, and Capitalism

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TITLE: CRITICAL COMMUNICATION PEDAGOGY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO TIME, LABOR, AND CAPITALISM

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As a GTA working in a critically oriented Communication Studies department at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, I am encouraged to be(come) an instructor whose teaching methods are steeped in the principles of critical pedagogy. Over the course of my college career I have come to embrace critical theory and wholeheartedly believe in the pedagogical principles that critical pedagogy (CP), and more specifically critical communication pedagogy (CCP), uphold. I believe in cultivating an ethic of care for my students; I believe in building community; in engaging in critical dialogue; I believe teaching is an incredible opportunity to learn and grow with students in a classroom.

One of the most inhibiting things I have come across as I have made attempts to uphold such principles of critical pedagogy is the issue of *time*. Teaching takes time. Caring for students takes time. Being available and building relationships with students takes time. And that is precisely what is lacking for so many of us, GTAs, college instructors, and professors. This research report is about the problematic tension of trying to uphold a critical pedagogy in a system – a capitalist system – in which time is hard to come by. How can we perform an ethic of care in the classroom when we have no time to extend that same care to ourselves? How do we cultivate community in the classroom when we have very little time to be part of our own communities of choice? What does it mean to do critical pedagogy in a system that normalizes stress and overburdens instructors on all levels? In this research report I address these questions

and focus specifically on the contradiction of our philosophical orientation towards critical pedagogy and our uncritical rootedness in the demanding capitalist system of higher education.

To discuss the relationship between CP and CCP, capitalism, and time, I first address each of these issues individually and subsequently show their connection. I use my research on these subjects and weave autoethnographic accounts of my own experiences as a college instructor throughout this writing to provide a clear picture of the tensions between critical pedagogy's ideals and our society's orientation towards labor and time.

Key terms: Critical pedagogy; critical communication pedagogy; time; labor; capitalism; critical theory; oppression; liberation; teaching; academic culture; autoethnography.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Critical pedagogy is an ideological flagship of our Communication Studies Department at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale (SIUC). Accomplished and celebrated alumni from our department, such as John T. Warren and Deanna L. Fassett, have been instrumental in the development of critical communication pedagogy. As a Graduate Teaching Associate at SIUC, I have wholeheartedly adopted this teaching philosophy; although a critical pedagogy is a challenge to uphold because it asks a lot of reflexivity on the part of the instructor, I do my best to cultivate a critical, caring environment in my own classrooms. During my first year as a teacher and graduate student at SIUC, as I attempted to weave a critical pedagogy into my teaching, while simultaneously trying to read and write for my student classes, I ran into what I perceive as one of the biggest shortcomings in the literature on critical communication pedagogy: a conversation about time.

This paper will try to link the principles of critical communication pedagogy to a discussion about time and labor, and narrate how these issues connect in a capitalist system. I use my own experiences and observations and link these to critical pedagogy and critical communication pedagogy theories and to philosophies about time and capitalism. I use first person autoethnographic narratives because I believe that they are powerful windows into issues that are relevant to my research; in fact, there is no way to separate my experiences as a teacher and student in a university from the subject of my research. In the spirit of critical theory, I seek to understand the relationship between my experiences, the system in which I/we operate, and the culture in which those systems thrive. As critical instructors perpetually pressed for time, adhering to a critical pedagogy demands that we analyze the system in which we operate, and that we include a much-needed discussion around our relationship to labor and time.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: A REVIEW

I begin with a discussion on what critical pedagogy is, and how it relates to critical communication pedagogy. Critical communication pedagogy is not the same as critical pedagogy though it hinges on similar principles. Critical communication pedagogy is an effort by communication scholars (Fassett & Warren, 2007, 2008; Sprague 1992) to analyze and illuminate the particular function and importance of communication in critical pedagogy theories. Critical pedagogy – as a branch of critical theory – evolved over time to respond to problems in the education system and standard teaching methods. One of the most influential figures in the development of critical pedagogy is Paulo Freire. Freire is known for his significant work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000) in which he calls for the necessity of education and literacy as a tool for the liberation of the peasant workers of Brazil in the 20th century. Freire has influenced many scholars and educators, within and outside of Brazil, to think differently about education. Freire interrogated the relationships and power dynamics occurring between teachers and students, and the role of a teacher in pedagogical spaces, and questioned what the function of education is/should be in general.

In one of his most influential critiques Freire describes the "banking model of education" as a flawed education system that is rooted in oppression (Freire, 1970/2000; Shor & Freire, 2003). This banking model illustrates the way in which teachers approach students as empty vessels – mere receptacles for the teacher's knowledge. A student is thus a docile body (in the Foucauldian sense; see Fassett & Warren, 2007) that has no agency in the classroom. The student is to do exactly as the teacher says, soak up deposited knowledge as a sponge, and come out at the end of the educational tract an adequately molded member of the masses. Freire described this system as follows:

> The banking concept of education, which serves the interests of oppression, is also necrophilic. Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world and inhibits their creative power. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 77)

In other words, the banking model of education kills the human spirit and enables the oppression of the masses. A critical pedagogy then, as Freire described, would ideally be a pedagogy of liberation. Critical pedagogy changes the relationship between teacher and student, and generates a space for critical thought, and reflexivity, enabling individuals to reach their fullest human potential (Freire, 1970/2000).

Freire labeled this critical response to the banking model of education "problem posing education" – a pedagogy in which critical questions are asked in an attempt to make people aware of the oppressive nature of our respective societies, and to empower a liberated citizenry. Freire adds: "the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students. The students – no longer docile listeners – are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (Freire, 1970/2000, pp. 80-81). The nature of critical pedagogy, as described by Freire, is fundamentally dialogic and collaborative. It thus makes sense that this pedagogy is incredibly relevant to communication scholars, as it adds immediate praxis to the teaching of communication concepts. For this reason, we often refer to *doing* critical pedagogy: it is an embodied practice that is unquestionably relevant to the instruction of communication theory. Critical pedagogy, as inspired by Paulo Freire, is a way of being that orients towards social justice, liberation, and human development.

Another important angle that is crucial in our understanding of the origins of critical pedagogy is described by Henry Giroux as he traces the developments that occurred in the Frankfurt School in the middle of the 20th century through the work of critical thinkers such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Habermas. Giroux (2003) explains this development in great detail, and though I don't have the time or space to delve into this work at length in this research report, I do believe it is important to point out some of the main ideas that are pertinent to our understanding of critical pedagogy. Giroux describes how the development of critical theory is relevant to the system of education. As critical theory is interested in uncovering injustices in society and making changes towards a socially just world, so too is the purpose of a critical theory of education – or critical pedagogy – to push institutions of education and educational practices in a more socially just direction. That means we first have to acknowledge the fact that educational systems are not neutral spaces, but are, rather, always tied up in ideology and are thus inherently political. Giroux writes:

> According to the Frankfurt School, all thought and theory are tied to a specific interest in the development of a society without injustice. Theory, in this case, becomes a transformative activity that views itself as explicitly political and commits itself to the projection of a future that is as yet unfulfilled. … Rather than proclaiming a positivist notion of neutrality, critical theory openly takes sides in the interest of struggling for a better world. (2003, p. 35)

Critical theory, and by extension, critical pedagogy, directly opposes a positivist ideology that claims systems of education to be neutral and apolitical. In fact, institutions of education play crucial roles in upholding the hegemony of systems of oppression. The goal of critical theory is to disrupt these systems of normalized oppression and use theory as a tool to liberate those who

are oppressed, and to work towards equality of all people. This is very much in line with the Freirean notion of pedagogy as a tool for liberation. In its contributions to critical theory, the Frankfurt School of thought has been influential in their critique of positivism, and in their insistence that theory is only meaningful if it is employed for the greater good of the people (Giroux, 2003). These philosophies have contributed to the development of a critical pedagogy.

Inspired by Freire and other teachers such as Thich Nhat Hanh, scholar and critical pedagogue bell hooks (1994) further develops a critical pedagogical framework that she calls an "engaged pedagogy." She explains that an engaged pedagogy seeks to liberate students from oppression. Hooks is known for criticizing the "white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy" (hooks, 2000) as the foundation upon which our culture is built, and that is inextricably intertwined with our education system. Like many other critical scholars, hooks seeks to illuminate the racist, sexist, and classist practices that are interwoven in U.S. American higher education. In her book *Teaching to transgress* (1994), hooks makes an observation that is particularly resonant with me. As positivist ideologies in the education system have systematically emphasized the reign of the mind and neglected the province of the human body and spirit, hooks observes that the general well-being of academics is often lacking. She writes: "the objectification of the teacher within bourgeois educational structures seemed to denigrate notions of wholeness and uphold the idea of a mind/body split, one that promotes and supports compartmentalization" (hooks, 1994, p. 16). hooks advocates for a dedication towards self-actualization (a wholeness) within teachers if they are to play a liberatory role in the classroom. She is basically arguing that a critical pedagogy that seeks to motivate critical dialogue and liberatory practices is only possible if the teacher is dedicated to a process of self-actualization and personal well-being. This issue comes

up throughout this paper, as I question what elements of our educational institutions stand in the way of such self-actualization.

Critical theorists, educators, and writers such as Freire (1970/2000), Shor and Freire (2003), Shor (1996), Giroux (2003; 2004), hooks (1994; 2000), Wink (2005), Kincheloe (2005), and Delpit (1988) have given me an understanding of what a critical pedagogy can look like. There is not one single critical pedagogy out there, but rather a diverse set of critical pedagogical approaches that all aim to locate injustices within the systems of education in which we operate. Critical pedagogy also aims to honestly examine our own contributions to such injustices through reflexivity (Freire, 1970/2000) and an active effort towards self-actualization (hooks, 1994). The overarching goal of a critical pedagogy is always to generate a more socially just world through our educational practices for our students, and for ourselves and our colleagues. Expanding upon this body of work is a branch of critical pedagogy located in the field of communication studies in the form of critical communication pedagogy. Communication scholars such as Sprague (1992), and Fassett and Warren (2007, 2008) have conducted influential work to develop a foundation for critical communication pedagogy. As communication scholars who both theorize about communication practices in the classroom and teach communication theory to students, a critical communication pedagogy hones in on the influence and effects of language, dialogue, narratives, performance, and the dissemination of ideologies in educational settings.

In their book *Critical communication pedagogy,* which functions as one of the foundational texts on the subject, Fassett and Warren (2007) write that they "like Freire … are trying to address the context of education within the framework of relevance, of giving flesh and blood to the work we do in the pedagogical settings we experience" (p. 2). This relevance means

that the objective of critical communication pedagogues is to create classroom communities that are meaningful to students and that are relevant to their lived experiences. Critical communication pedagogy aims to engage students where they are in their own lives, and tries to assist them in making a difference in the world the way they see fit. In other words, rather than being told what and how to think (the banking model of education), critical communication pedagogy attempts to provide students with tools to navigate their world as responsible communicators and informed citizens. This engagement with students, and the relationship that such dialogic communication requires, is an important element of critical communication pedagogy.

Though Fassett and Warren (2007, 2008; see also Warren & Fassett, 2015) believe that the true meaning of the discipline of critical communication pedagogy is found in the work and dialogue of communication scholars working as critical pedagogues, they explain the location of this particular field of study as follows:

> Critical communication pedagogy is, in its finest moments, the best possible combination of work in critical pedagogy – scholarship and teaching that work toward a more socially just and accountable society – and communication pedagogy – both instructional communication (i.e., the fine attention we pay to the role of communication in teaching and learning) and communication education (i.e., what we've learned as a discipline, about how teaching communication is a unique responsibility and challenge, distinct from other fields). (Fassett & Warren, 2008, p. 6)

In short, critical communication pedagogy synthesizes social justice work and communication theory to establish a classroom in which students and teachers work together to communicate across difference and cultures to try to make the world we share a better place. Having worked

from the 2015 textbook by Warren and Fassett for the CMST 101 Introduction to Oral Communication course in the past year, I can relay that this is never an easy task; it requires constant reflection on one's teaching practices and the classroom dynamics that result from such practices. In an attempt to reach students, one has to get to know them. That means first and foremost, some sort of community has to be established in which they feel safe to communicate with you – the teacher – and with one another. As each group of students is different and has different needs, this goal requires ongoing adjustment and evaluation.

As graduate student instructors in the CMST 101 classroom – a hybrid course devoted to public speaking skills and communication theory – we discuss challenging issues such as racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, culture, identity, oppression, and marginalization. We talk about the different positionalities of individuals in the classroom. This requires a lot of reflexivity on the part of the instructor as well as the students. As is the case with all critical theory, we have to look at systems of power and marginalization, and identify moments in which we are harmed by such systems, and moments in which we benefit. This work takes time and effort, and has to be done from a place of true commitment to students, as well as the self. It also has to be done with sensitivity and care, as difficult subjects come up during discussions around privilege and marginalization, and it requires a fine-tuned sensitivity to guide such topics in directions that are helpful to students without alienating anyone nor allowing for hurtful ignorance to be rewarded or left unaddressed. As a graduate instructor I am inspired by my department – a department with a particular dedication to critical theory in general, and critical communication pedagogy as a specific direction of study – to strive to become a critical pedagogue in the classroom. Our community of scholars is driven by social justice principles. The textbook we use is written from/through a critical communication pedagogy lens. But

talking about social justice, and believing in critical pedagogy is different from “doing it.” And the lived experience of many graduate instructors is often filled with stress and exhaustion. So, these are the questions I have been contemplating through this process: How do the theory and the reality of teaching in/with/through critical communication pedagogy intersect? How do we make theoretical ideals reality? Is that even possible?

TIME

Time is scarce these days. I go into my office on Monday morning tired and overwhelmed after a full weekend of writing and reading for class. My colleague enters the office 30 minutes later while uttering the standard greeting that is framed as a question but that never really asks for an answer: "Hey, how are you?" The response is a long and audible sigh. "Yep, me too," they respond. For critical pedagogues there is still one thing we are entirely enslaved by, and that is our contractual allegiance to productivity which is entirely steeped in a non-critical capitalist machinery. Weeks prior I sit in the cafeteria for a quick meal between two classes when I see my friend who is a doctoral student in the Physiology Department. We exchange updates about how we are doing, and I express my general exhaustion and the challenges of teaching. He looks at me sympathetically and says: "Remember, Yvet, we are cheap laborers." I laugh at his straightforwardness, and also think about the difference between teaching math and teaching social justice concepts in a college of liberal arts. If I believe in the cultural theories and the social justice principles that I am teaching in my CMST 101 classes from a book written by critical pedagogues John T. Warren and Deanna L. Fassett (2015), I cannot treat my work as cheap labor. But my friend's comment lingers in the weeks that follow, and rings loudly in my head whenever I am faced with responsibilities that quite simply do not fit into the limits of 24-hour days (that is, if I also want to ensure a healthy amount of sleep).

Critical pedagogy calls for reflexive teaching, for an ethic of care in the classroom, for radical love. These are big commitments; they cannot be achieved half-heartedly. Reflexivity and praxis are some of the fundamental principles coming out of Paulo Freire's pedagogy (1970/2000). Fassett and Warren (2007) write the following:

> Perhaps most relevant for our work as critical communication educators is Freire's definition of praxis, which calls for teachers (teacher-students) and students (student-teachers) to reflect and act together, collaboratively, in order to transform the world. But it is essential to note that, in our desire to improve the human condition, we must not take action *on* others, *for* others, or *to* others; a pedagogy of the oppressed, in the Freirean sense, is work undertaken together, *with* one another, to improve our collective lot in life, to work towards what Freire described as our ontological vocation, our reason for being: to become "more fully human." (p. 51, italics in original)

As critical pedagogues we approach our students as individuals that possess knowledge, and we invite their lived experiences into the classroom because we believe we can learn from one another. We believe their experiences matter, their views are meaningful, and that their unique and diverse identities in the world hold potential to teach others. We do not see students as blank slates on which to impart our knowledge, but rather view the classroom as a space for dialogue and shared learning. If we concur with Freire and believe that we are here as teachers and students and human beings to "become more fully human" – we have to look critically at the dehumanizing elements of the system in which we operate.

It is Friday afternoon when I get into my car to drive home after a long week of classes. My body feels tired, my mind feels tired, and I can feel tears of fatigue developing not far below the surface of my eyelids. When I return home, I immediately begin to grade homework assignments that my students have just turned into me. If I do not grade them right now, they will pile up, and that will only create more stress later on. During the weekend I have to write a book report, prepare for a presentation, read around 100 pages of critical theory, and prepare a lecture for my Monday teaching classes. My sense of despair comes from the fact that I cannot foresee a

moment in which I do not have to do something work related. I wake up on Saturday morning with an immediate feeling of anxiety in the pit of my stomach. I have so much to do. As weeks go by in this perpetual production mode, I am starting to feel angry. I receive a message from a dear friend who is coming into town the next weekend, and whom I have not seen in months as she moved away to be a graduate student in a different state. She writes: "Are you sure you have time? I wanna see you but I also don't want there to be any pressure!" To which I respond: "Ha! No, I don't have time. BUT, if I let my obligations be in charge, I basically NEVER have time. And you know what? That is some seriously unhealthy bullshit." And it is unhealthy. We all know it is unhealthy. But we all participate. Some weeks later I write to that same friend: "You know, I feel like I am actually losing my mind. Not in a drastic panic sort of way, but in slow dulling decline.... grad school as the place you lose your wits." She responds: "I know exactly what you mean. Let's talk soon."

In our required pedagogy class, designed to be a parallel class for first-year teachers, we read the book *Teaching from the heart: Critical communication pedagogy in the communication classroom* (Rudick, Golsan, & Cheesewright, 2017). I really appreciate the philosophies and principles of critical communication pedagogy addressed throughout this book. In relation to cultivating an ethic of care in the classroom the book reads:

> Many students struggle with family, health, relationship, financial, and mental health issues while enrolled in higher education. As a loving instructor, you must create a classroom culture where they feel open to talk with you (and, hopefully, others) about these issues. (2017, p. 57)

This type of care entails interacting with students outside of class-time; e-mailing about absences, and essentially building relationships of trust with students. I am a little irked by the

term “must” in this section. It sounds like an obligation, forceful even. But, at the same time, I understand that creating a culture of care in the classroom is a must if one indeed wishes to approach some semblance of a critical pedagogy. After all, to care is to be present for someone, to listen and to nurture empathy and love. Isn’t this exactly what is so desperately needed in our societies?

In another chapter Rudick et al. (2017) write about the importance of mentoring and how to establish meaningful mentor-mentee relationships:

> Once you show students that your commitment to their lives goes beyond simply being in your office at a predetermined time, you will find that they will regularly come to you for advice or support about issues beyond your class content. Although you are certainly not a therapist, you may find that you will provide many of the same functions – a shoulder to lean (or cry) on. Share in each other’s triumphs and failures. And work toward creating a foundation of mutual respect and love. You will be surprised by how rewarding students, and you, will find it. (p. 62)

This is a wonderful sentiment, and I applaud everyone who is able to manage such connections with their students. Throughout this semester, I have had several meaningful interactions with students that were filled with compassion and kindness. But mentoring is a time-consuming job, and not a job that anyone should take lightly. Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that a teacher is able to develop the type of relationship described above with 40 plus students each semester. If such closeness can develop with a couple of students, I would assume that is a special occasion. I recall a conversation with a colleague recently in which they talked about their students coming to their office hours to talk about their lives. My colleague looked at me and said: “Eeeh, it’s nice, but” shaking their head sadly, “I am super busy, and sometimes have to cut it short to get

work done." I know my colleague to be a respectful and kindhearted person, and know that they are not stingy with their time – however, they only have so much of it.

I myself have run into similar issues. When a student who has disclosed to me that they are struggling with depression and anxiety expresses concern over e-mail about some comments made by their classmates during class, I take time to weigh my words, and compose a thoughtful response in return. I also devise a lesson plan to address this issue in class next time we meet. This next class period is followed by another e-mail from the same student apologizing for not being able to speak up during the class because of anxiety, and asking a profound question about ways to address oppressive language from people who themselves occupy marginalized positions. I write a long e-mail back, to acknowledge this difficult topic. When I receive an e-mail like this from a concerned or troubled student, I drop everything I am doing and ensure that my correspondence is respectful, meaningful, and compassionate. I do this because I believe it is one of the most important aspects of teaching, and these interactions may be among the most impactful – both for me and the student – of the entire semester. This type of one-on-one communication with students outside of the classroom space, after class or over e-mail, is where true dialogue can occur and where student-teacher relationships are built. I notice that students who feel heard when I respond to their concerns over e-mail or in person are also much more willing to freely interact during our class time. It takes time to build the kind of trust with students that enables them to fully engage in our class conversations. These interactions also have an impact on my teaching – when there is a flow of energy between the people in a classroom, all interactions become more meaningful.

Aside from a good heart and a willingness to try, what is the number one requirement for cultivating the types of relationships between students and teachers described by Rudick et al.

(2017)? Time. And, while I try to establish a culture of care in my classrooms, I struggle with my own "family, health, relationship, financial, and mental health issues" – and it isn't looking pretty. Interaction with family members is scarce and distracted, I have no time to establish a healthy exercise routine and have not had time or energy to cook a healthy meal for months. My house is literally falling apart because no one has time or money to attend to its demise. My relationship has suffered immensely due to our busy schedules. All of these issues have an effect on mental health. For me in particular, not having time to process anything is detrimental to my overall well-being. So, I am adhering to a teaching philosophy that aspires to cultivate a world in which we can "become more fully human" while I am losing parts of myself in all other aspects of my life because I am operating in a school system that demands so much labor that I have no time for anything else. If a critical pedagogy is reflected in our way of being in the classroom, there has to be a critical well-being that evaluates how we are able to extend that same care to ourselves in our lives outside of the academy. For the average graduate student in our department, the teaching position lasts for about six years: two years in a master's program, four years in a doctoral program. For those of us who have lives outside of academia—relationships, family, children to take care of—that is a long stretch to keep a life on hold. And, can we advocate a holistic approach to teaching, when that same holistic attitude is – because of the demand of our labor – not reflected in the rest of our lives?

This is precisely the issue that bell hooks describes in *Teaching to transgress* (1994). I nod my head fervently as I move through the pages in which she talks about the prevalence of "unwell academics"; how often times academics pour themselves so much into their work, that this becomes the most developed part of their identity. She troubles this by stating that for a

teacher to be effective, developing only one part of the self and neglecting other parts is simply not going to cut it:

> Progressive, holistic education, "engaged pedagogy" is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy. For unlike these two teaching practices, it emphasizes well-being. That means that teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students. (hooks, 1994, p. 15)

As I read this, I know that she is right on a fundamental level. I also know that the way academia is designed, and the increasing time-constraints students and professors face form often insurmountable blocks towards this path of self-actualization. The question then becomes: If this seems an impossibly lofty goal, should we strive for it? Or should the question be: If achieving a holistic sense of well-being is a crucial need and a radical act in a time in which so many people are struggling, do we need to become more critical of the system that prevents such holistic commitments?

I am leaning towards the latter, precisely because I believe that in a time of abundant disconnect, widespread depression, and cultural tensions, striving for well-being feels like the only route to survival. I am reminded of Condit's (1993) article "The critic as empath" in which she writes about the role of the critic as empathetic human beings that impact their worlds through their words and actions. As a rhetorician, she writes specifically about rhetoric, and the role of the rhetorical critic. For communication scholars, teaching classes on communication, rhetoric is the bloodline of our work. I think that Condit's notion of the "critic as empath" relates closely to the goals of critical communication pedagogy: the critical pedagogue as empath, so to speak. Condit (1993) writes:

> The methodology of empathic criticism begins in the recognition of the tenet, held by many human groups, that the central value is care for all living things. This value does not encourage the critic to adopt a partisan stance that favors some human groups and dismisses others. Instead, it encourages the attempt to achieve an empathic orientation to all around us. The empathic approach is a highly demanding critical method. It requires we engage both our minds and our emotions. (pp. 187-188)

Similarly, critical pedagogy requires a significant level of empathy for students: an ethic of care. When we allow students to tell their stories in the classroom, we quickly find out what immense suffering a lot of students have to deal with. Students come from diverse backgrounds, some stable, and some very unstable. We witness speeches in which students narrate how they have experienced poverty, abuse, torn apart families, violence, and many students speaking about mental illness because it is so prevalent in their lives. My heart aches when I hear their stories, and am often reminded of my own struggles. Bearing witness to these narratives in a classroom setting as empathic critical pedagogues means that we have the responsibility to acknowledge the complexity of student experiences; it means that we have to keep their lived experiences in mind as we cover class content or as conflict arises; that we have a responsibility to make our class content relevant and useful to them; and that we provide adequate support and guidance when that is needed and appropriate.

This becomes a source of struggle when the institutions in which we work are not designed to really address these issues. We may not really have adequate time for the demands of such empathic labor. Our educational institutions are designed entirely to drag students and instructors from one class to the next. Personal issues and suffering have to be swept under the rug for the sake of survival. The only problem is: nothing gets solved. And thus the pain and

suffering are perpetuated to become apparent in dysfunctional relationships, self-destructive patterns, harmful politics, and violence. We often find ourselves without adequate time for healing, for processing, or for building humanizing relationships with students that are rooted in an ethic of care. And the cycle continues.

Our aims for a critical pedagogy are righteous, but are they achievable? We are operating in a culture that continues to actively cultivate a dehumanizing education machine that leaves no space or time for a truly holistic approach to learning. Let's face it: our pedagogy, even if we are dedicated to the principles of critical communication pedagogy, is not really liberatory. Our own consent to academic practices that squelch holistic notions of wellness and over-values ever increasing levels of production will never enable freedom. We are too constrained in the systems of higher education and the forces that pressure us to take on more than we can lift. When we find ourselves lacking time for our own relationships and well-being, who are we to teach holistically? Can we do what bell hooks (1994) prescribes? To what degree do we have to liberate ourselves before we can adhere to a critical pedagogy? The hegemony of a capitalistic stress that we all comply with and consent to is our domination. It isn't healthy, it isn't truly productive, and it isn't truly critical. When we take a step back we can look closely at the way we orient towards labor, the shame that arises from not doing enough labor, and the ways in which we sense a form of pride when expressing to one another how unbelievably busy we are. This is the culture that we have to critically analyze; this is also the culture of our oppression.

CAPITALISM AS EVER-PRESENT UNDERCURRENT

Enter a conversation about capitalism. Obviously, this system of perpetual productivity comes from somewhere. Many renowned scholars have talked about the influence of capitalism on our societies and psyches, and many of them link their work to Marxist philosophy. Of course, Karl Marx is the most influential figure in relation to a critical analysis of capitalism as a system. Though I am aware that Marx's philosophies are flawed and incomplete and do not always translate well into the 21st century, I am convinced that some of his ideas about labor and time are particularly useful for a critical look at our day to day habits. How do we orient toward time and labor? What do we consider normal levels of stress? Where do these ideas come from? What is some of the rhetoric surrounding time and labor so prevalent in the Western world that reveals our uncritical emersion into a capitalist system that values labor and devalues leisure? What does this mean for critical pedagogues? Max Weber, in his book *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (1958), traces the European and U.S. American origins of the capitalist mindset of the 20th (and now 21st) century. He quotes Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the Unites States of America with the famous saying:

> Remember, that *time* is money. He [sic] that can earn ten shillings a day by his labor, and goes abroad, or sits idle, one half of that day, though he spends but sixpence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon that the only expense; he has really spent, rather thrown away, five shillings, beside. (p. 48, italics in original)

It is this attitude in relation to making money and accumulating profit that has become a vital force running through the veins of this nation and the Western world at large. This is the capitalist spirit that summons "the individual toward the increase of his [sic] capital which is assumed as an end in itself" (Weber, 1958, p. 51). What we see in this quote by Franklin is an

ethic that encourages a disposition towards labor that seeks to maximize production. Every moment "wasted" is considered a missed opportunity for wealth accumulation. Each moment spent leisurely, or idly, is futile.

Whether we like it or not we are all situated in a capitalistic system that, over the past centuries, has become so interwoven into the fabric of our modern societies (particularly in the West, and increasingly on a global scale), that we rarely recognize it for what it is. Though humanity has invented, and continues to invent, technologies that make human labor obsolete, that somehow has not resulted in decreased labor hours – even if it is directly responsible for increasing unemployment. William Booth (1991), in his article "Economies of time," writes:

> The perverse and necessary consequence of the peculiar capitalist valuation of time is that [the] fruits of human science, capable of enlarging free time and easing toil, become, instead, incentives to (and the means for) overwork, for still greater consumption of time by the production process. (p. 18)

The root of this paradox, as Weber (1958) describes, lies in the very cultural norms that form the foundation for modern Western culture. In particular, Weber ascribes these norms to a Protestant ethic that adheres to principles of asceticism: making money and accumulating wealth as a sign of virtue, while making sure never to enjoy any of it.

Over time, as Weber (1958) points out, the direct Protestant ethic – or its foundation in religious morals – in relation to wealth accumulation has dissipated, but the cultural habits and relationship to time and labor continue to be relevant. The way that we relate to time and how we feel compelled to fill up our time is not a natural occurrence but a historical and cultural construct rooted in capitalist ideology (Allen, 2008). Booth (1991) writes the following about the concept of time in a capitalist system:

> It is the tendency of capital to appropriate all time, that is, to transform the free time which it makes possible into surplus time… Since persons, on this view, are seen as potential vehicles for surplus time/surplus value, the hours they spend outside of the production process must be considered either as strictly unproductive and hence wasted and deplorable, or as recreation, time spent renewing the person so as better to allow for a still more intensive expenditure of his or her productive hours. (pp. 17-18)

Rhetoric that insinuates precisely this ideological orientation towards time is sprinkled throughout our days. We are "just being lazy" when a colleague catches us watching a non-work-related YouTube video. When taking some time during the day to go hiking we are "recharging." We express feeling guilty while watching a movie on Netflix while we "really *should be* reading." We have, through our upbringing in a capitalist society, internalized a sense of shame around being "unproductive" and have cultivated an idea that every activity outside of our paid labor time is somehow in service of that labor—work that is the ultimate justification for our existence.

Picchi (2017) further illuminates this trend of shaming leisure or idleness while praising statements that indicate busyness. Where a century ago social status was shown off by purchasing luxury goods and enjoying leisure time, we are now experiencing a cult of busyness. Being busy has become the ultimate proof that a person is valuable and indispensable. Especially in the United States, this seems to be an ever-increasing phenomenon:

> Americans often broadcast their status by emphasizing how busy they are – so busy, in fact, that they lack time even to catch up with friends, let alone take a few weeks to explore some distant shore. About six of 10 working Americans told Gallup that they don't have enough time to do what they want. (Picchi, 2017, para. 3)

What this article argues is that social status is now derived from statements about the level of busyness and stress a person endures. Rhetoric that indicates stress is thus rewarded with social capital. Picchi (2017) writes about the "humblebrag" as a phenomenon that is observed on social media:

> People who brag about being busy on social media are viewed as working harder and having a higher social status and having higher human capital. The last value may be key to understanding how busyness has ballooned into a potent status symbol. (para. 10)

This indicates that especially in U.S. American culture, it is difficult to address being overworked, or burnt-out, as that would be sign of weakness or entail a loss of value of oneself. The way in which we communicate about work and stress has a big impact on how we discuss problems related to stress and labor. Of course, the cultural trend described above insidiously benefits neoliberal politics and predatory capitalism. It also actively harms people caught in the mire of work-load oppression and creates real roadblocks on the path towards well-being.

As I am sitting in my office, a group of colleagues is having a conversation about their assignment for a class they are in. One of them states being exhausted, and mentions the many hours they spent on a particular assignment. This evokes the response: "Well, nobody said grad school would be easy!" I look up from my work angrily. "No," I chime in from a dark corner in the office. "That is just not right. There is a difference between something being challenging and being so overburdened with work that all joy is sucked out of life." They all look at me bewilderedly. Ah, yes, I have become the angry office lady that yells at people from the shadows of her tiny computer corner. But my point is: there is a difference between a cerebral challenge and a challenge against the clock – and we often confuse the two.

One of the founding texts for the discipline of scientific management was that of Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911): *The principles of scientific management*. In this text Taylor describes a process of production increase for industrial factories, and illustrates in detail how workers were pushed to significantly increase their production rate through narrow observation and manipulation by those in management. Though the text is quite crude, the methods described to increase production from workers has been incredibly influential in the way our culture orients towards labor, time management, and the role of the manager in the production process. After an example of increasing the quantity of pig-iron handled by workers each day, Taylor (1911) writes:

> Now it must be clearly understood that in these experiments we were not trying to find the maximum work that a man could do on a short spurt or for a few days, but that our endeavor was to learn what really constituted a full day's work for a first-class man [sic]; the best day's work that a man could properly do, year in and year out, and still thrive under. (para. 34)

Though the labor of handling pig-iron has, in many cases, been taken over by machinery, the scientific management of the labor force has not. This mentality towards labor is still very much part of our culture, and is thus not irrelevant to our work in academia. What level of productivity does a professor have to maintain while on tenure? How many articles can a student read each week? How many publications are required before someone can be considered for tenure and promotion?

So, how does this relate to critical pedagogy and communication studies? There is perhaps a tendency in academia to imagine that our work is situated outside of the world of Marx's illustrative assembly lines and alienated labor, that maybe we are theorizing the system

from an outside perspective. But the commodification of higher education over the course of the past several decades has meant that it now too must obey the mandates of productivity for the sake of productivity. Cultural critic and scholar Peter McLaren has written several essays about globalization, capitalism, and higher education. In the article "Teaching against globalization and the new imperialism," co-authored with Ramin Farahmandpur (2001), they write: "Under the command of the market economy, not even universities, colleges, and vocational schools are immune from the economic policies favoring capital accumulation" (p. 140). The increasing costs of a college degree, the debt students take on in exchange for a degree, and the ever increasing fees students are forced to pay to their for-profit institutions of higher education should not be swallowed uncritically. McLaren and Farahmandpur go on to say that "the increasing social policies that support for-profit universities have made higher education an extension of the market economy" (p. 140). Students hear their entire lives that in order to be successful in life, they have to get a good job, and to get a good job they have to attend at least a four-year college. The truth of this maxim is debatable altogether, but this is the system we are working in as devoted critical pedagogues. Students come to college not necessarily knowing who they are or what they are interested in but are somehow convinced that spending thousands of dollars a semester will get them *somewhere* in life. And, more often than not, we will hear students exclaim on the first day of classes that their reason for being in college is the promised result of making money in the future.

That is to say, our critical pedagogy in the college classroom does not mesh easily with the system in which this classroom is situated. It does not mesh easily with the intent of many students in those classrooms either. That is not to say that our dedication to social justice issues, and our ethic of love and care is not important. To the contrary, I believe it is extremely

necessary in these times of turmoil, social insecurity, and conflict. But, I also believe it often is a drop against a wave. And I think that for educators to make a significant impact in the lives of students, and to build genuine relationships, more time is needed with the students, and more time needs to be available to the instructor to make such efforts last. As a graduate instructor in the academy, this is a source of unending frustration. And as a graduate instructor in a department that holds principles of critical pedagogy in high esteem, this is an issue that needs to be scrutinized.

In a piece by Judith Walker (2009) in which she analyzes the time dimension in the globalization of higher education, she writes the following: "In the academic capitalist university under globalization, time is accelerated, leaving faculty and students feeling as though they are rushed and left with little or No Time" (p. 496). Though the acceleration of time in a globalizing world has an effect on everyone, she points out that "academics suffer particularly badly from this cult of speed, compression of time and intensification of work" and that "although working hours have decreased overall in Western countries, longer working hours afflict two particular groups: 'high level professionals and unskilled service workers'" (Walker, 2009, p. 496). A colleague of mine recently described feeling that academic work is like a liquid, in that it fills every empty minute of every day. A similar sentiment is described by Walker (2009): "In universities, which house and produce knowledge workers, work knows no time-bounds; it seeps into every nook and cranny of one's life" (pp. 496-497). It is precisely because of the nature of the job that academia is so easily (and perhaps insidiously) infiltrated by capitalistic habits of perpetual production. If, quite literally, the work is never done – the bloating workload will take over every inch we allow it to take over. And as we are living in a culture that is still very much steeped in that work ethic described by Max Weber in *The Protestant ethic of capitalism* (1958),

we are up against a powerful force that is so entrenched in the culture that is isn't always easy to recognize.

Walker (2009) writes that work pressures in the academy have increased over time. Though she addresses the fact that this development may look different in different departments she does point to an overall tendency in academic settings:

> Academics generally all face a "time crunch" where everything has become more time-sensitive – to absorb more information in a limited amount of time; to publish more; to serve more committees – all while maintaining a nominally strong research record, serving the public, teaching, and being a public intellectual. (p. 497)

When dealing with these types of increasing pressures, it is easy to see how that changes the dynamics of student-teacher relationships, and student expectations. "As a result faculty members may not have as much time as they need to read books, engage in face-to-face meetings with students, and actually reflect and conduct research" (Walker, 2009, p. 497). Under these circumstances – or rather, within this culture of time-labor dynamics – critical pedagogy and critical communication pedagogy principles sometimes feel absurdly impossible. The tenets of care for students are difficult to swallow whenever we can barely find time to care for ourselves and our loves ones. From where I am sitting, though, that does not mean that the tenets of care, reflexivity, self-actualization, and empathy are wrong – but that the culture we are operating in and the demands that we make of ourselves and let others make of us are unsustainable in the long run.

Of course, our experiences with stress and never having enough time in the academy are just reflections of the social reality of our society at large. As I am writing this paper I have come across several articles on social media that raise questions about the pervasive issue of stress and

increasing work-loads in the United States (Jones, 2016; Picchi, 2017; Schawbel, 2017). Some of these articles express concern about the social consequences of increasing labor hours and shrinking time for emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. Though U.S. American discourse around work still often refers to a "40 hour work-week" – the reality is that many people work much more:

> Employees are spending more of their time doing work but their compensation hasn't adjusted to reflect this increase in productivity. The legacy nine-to-five workday no longer exists either, and Gallup estimates that it is now 47 hours for a full-time salaried worker. Technology, especially smartphones and wearables, has greatly expanded the workday even more as employees are expected to respond to business matters anytime or place. (Schawbel, 2017, para. 2)

This article by Schawbel (2017) continues to point out that this development is leading to an increase in burn-out among employees, and has an overall negative effect on work climate in many companies and institutions.

The negative impact of increasing work hours is also reflected in student attitudes in our classrooms. Many have to work alongside their education to be able to afford to go to college. When I ask my students how they are doing they often respond by saying that they are tired. Now I will concede that some of that tiredness may be due to unhealthy sleeping habits and too much partying; however, I am not so sure that is the reason for all their complaints. More revealing may be the amount of student speeches I have witnessed over the past year about the issues of stress, anxiety, depression, and mental illness. Many students indicate suffering from one or more of these issues or mental illnesses. And though neoliberalism has been instrumental in pushing mental health issues on the individual (Esposito & Perez, 2014; Teghtsoonian, 2009)

as their personal responsibility, it seems obvious that there is a link between increasing stress and work-load and mental health.

There was a proseminar today. Meaning, a professional seminar on Friday afternoon at 4 o'clock that we are required to attend as graduate students. I would not mind the proseminars so much if I did not have so much work to do, and if I weren't so exhausted. Reluctantly I enter the Kleinau Theater where the proseminar is held and wait for the speaker to start the lecture. The stage of the seminar space is filled with artwork and creative interpretations of Tolkien's novels. Intrigued, I await the message of the speaker Dr. Elyse Pineau – a retired professor from our department who now teaches in the honors program at our university. She speaks to us about her honors class on Tolkien, and mentions that the class reads only one book every semester, but they read it thoroughly and with attention. She also shows us that she invites students to use their creativity and imagination when navigating the novel's stories and interpreting them through artful expressions of their choice. I nod my head: "Yes! That makes so much sense." She continues by telling some unknown facts about Tolkien's life and points out that he was most inspired to write during months of boredom in a hospital bed: That's when his genius translated into some of the most influential writing of the 20th century. I jolt in my seat, nudge a colleague next to me and ask them for a pen. I take the pen that is offered, roll up my sleeve, and write on my arm in big letters: BOREDOM.

I am struck by several thoughts after this proseminar. First of all, it does not escape me that Dr. Elyse Pineau was able to dedicate her time to developing a class on Tolkien in the way that she has only *after* her retirement… The creativity of the class, the pedagogy of care, and the depth of learning that Pineau describes is not always feasible for instructors pre-retirement. For lecturers and instructors who do not have tenure track status, the academy is not a place with a

lot of freedom and these instructors often face stress and low wages. It would be wonderful if professors actually had the freedom to instruct one class with 100% dedication and care for a semester. I try to imagine what college would look like if all instructors could dedicate the same time to their courses that Dr. Pineau was able to dedicate to this one. Another thought that strikes me is the fact that this class is only offered in the honors program at our university. I am familiar with this program as I joined its ranks during my undergraduate years, and I know that some of the best classes I had were facilitated by the honors program. The program requires a certain GPA, and thus only a small number of undergraduates can enjoy these particular courses. Imagine everyone being able to take such courses. What if all instructors had the creative freedom and the time to develop their dream courses? How would the institution of higher education transform? And would that enable the type of student-teacher relationships that critical pedagogies so adamantly advocate for?

As I walk out of this proseminar I look down at the pen marks on my arm. What is it about the idea of boredom that strikes me? Boredom is not something often experienced by the average graduate student and instructor. That is quite simply because there is no time for such a state of mind. But the over-stimulation through student classes and teaching obligations does not – in my experience – lead to even a fraction of the type of inspiration that Dr. Pineau talked about in relation to Tolkien. To the contrary, I believe the absence of boredom – or the absence of the opportunity for the mind to wander freely – actually leads to a decreased sharpness of the mind. As a graduate instructor taking three student courses (the required full-time credit hours for a semester) and teaching two sections of the introductory course, I find that I am trying desperately to keep a series of plates spinning in the air simultaneously. And though all of them remain in the air for the time being, they are all wobbling. To do something well, to do

something with dedication, to put your mind to something fully, you need time. And that is precisely what is lacking.

The longstanding capitalist habit to usurp time and demand productivity is not just a problem within higher education. For example, my stepson, currently 11-years-old and in the middle of sixth grade comes home after a full day of school to the reality of another three hours of homework. The reason for this homework is entirely unclear. One thing that is clear is that such demands of school on this young boy have one undeniable consequence: a dislike of learning. When math homework becomes your arch-nemesis because it keeps you from actually living your life, it is not surprising one comes to hate the subject. Homework for the sake of homework. Productivity for the sake of productivity. When my stepson ends up with half an hour of playtime after a long day of labor, and tries to see if his friends are home to play, he most always gets to hear that they can't play because they are still doing homework. As I observe this development I am filled with the type of rage one feels when faced with utter irrationality. Why? What is the point? How does this help any of these children become well-rounded human beings? Theirs is an oppression of useless tasks that accompany the status of "middle schooler." But again, even if the content of their classes is critically developed and assorted, if the method by which it is distributed is uncritically drenched in the capitalist habits of perpetual production, what is the ultimate effect and outcome of such labor?

During our pedagogy class we often talk about what it takes to be a critical pedagogue in our CMST 101 classrooms. I often come to the conclusion that one cannot simply "perform" critical pedagogy in the classroom: in order to uphold the principles of care and love a critical pedagogy aspires to, you have to *live* those principles, you have to *be* a caring and loving person. Critical pedagogy is not a coat you can put on when you enter the classroom, it has to be the

glow you nurture around your heart always. bell hooks (1994) writes wonderfully as ever in *Teaching to transgress*:

> All of us in the academy and in the culture as a whole are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions – and society – so that the way we live, teach, and work, can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passions for justice, and our love of freedom. (p. 34)

Of course bell hooks can write such things from a place of relative privilege in the academy. Her position is relatively secured and she has arrived (through hard work, for sure) at a place of relative freedom. To become a well-rounded human being, who approaches students holistically, we have to look at the cultural habits of our societies and we have to be reflexive about what we demand of ourselves and others. When Freire instructed student-teachers and teacher-students to "become more fully human," he referred to workers being liberated from the oppressive conditions of their respective society. His was a pedagogy of liberation. So long as we are oppressed by the capitalist systems of labor in which we are operating, we have to acknowledge that our critical pedagogies can only achieve so much. Stress, anxiety and depression – states of being that are not foreign to many a university level instructor – are signs that we have not achieved a truly holistic lifestyle. Signs, I believe, that require us to look critically at the elements of our lives that are preventing us from becoming "more fully human." In order for us, critical pedagogues and critical communication pedagogy scholars, to be the type of instructors we have theorized for our students – we have to critically reflect on the existing foundations of such labor, that is our relationship to time and the type of productivity we allow to dictate our days.

CONCLUSION

My colleagues and I sit in the sunlight of a hallway in the library during our critical communication pedagogy class, and we are discussing the sacrifices of academia. We are a small class, and share a comfortable community in which we feel safe to communicate. A colleague addresses the following quote from Fassett and Warren's (2007) *Critical communication pedagogy*: "I remember what the first year of my relationship with my partner felt like under the weight of grad school, what it did to us as I engaged in experiences that drew me away from her as I pursued education" (p. 139). I had underlined the exact same line. The authors cover a lot of the sacrifices that we make to be in academia, and a lot of them resonate with many of us in the class. After we share some sad examples of the sacrifices we make in our relationships, in relation to our bodies, and in the realm of self-care, we arrive at the question: "Why are we doing this?" I have pondered this question many times. What is the purpose? But I know the importance of pursuing knowledge, of learning about the world we live in, of tackling challenging subjects and learning from differing perspectives. I have always believed that going to college – more so even than obtaining a degree – was a way to grow as a person. I wholeheartedly stand by the notion that we are doing important and necessary work. So, I believe the more central question is: Why are we doing it *LIKE THIS*?

What is the cultural undercurrent of our modes of working in academia? This is precisely what I have been researching. Because, as communication scholars we know that our realities are constructed by our everyday communicative acts and performances. Our cultures are constitutive, we are active participants in the creation of our realities. We live under the hegemony of a capitalist work ethic and we consent to this by our very participation in the system. That also means that we are doing our work the way we do because we have been

instructed that this is the only way to do it. But, that is obviously not true. And yet, we are feeling stuck in this system, and any deviation from this system – breaking the rules – feels threatening, impossible, dangerous – the consequences of which might result in us losing our job, our funding, our status. But we have to ask ourselves a real question: Is this type of production, the pace at which we work, the stress we experience, ultimately sustainable? I think it is not. And I believe we are seeing the consequences of this fact in the many ways in which well-being is not achieved for ourselves, our families, our colleagues and friends, and our students. We see it in the form of depression, strained relationships, mental health issues, physical health issues that have their direct root in the ways we operate in the world.

Do we have to make do with the situation handed to us and make the best of it? Can we subvert the system? And what if the system – capitalism – is everywhere? What are reasonable accomplishments and which are the moments in which we have to surrender to our limitations? I have been struggling hard with these questions over the past year (or, perhaps more accurately, ever since I started going to school and doing jobs to make money), and I cannot say that I have the answers for them. I do feel, deep within the core of my being, that the way we are living is not maintainable in the long run. Something has got to give at some point. I wholeheartedly believe in Freire's liberatory pedagogy; I fully adhere to Giroux's subversion of the positivist neoliberal paradigm; I feel the absolute necessity of hooks' self-actualization. I just don't think it is enough to try to establish these things in the classrooms of our colleges and universities. We have to fight against the oppressive systems of the culture in which we operate. We have to look the dehumanizing oppression of capitalism square in the eye, and recognize how we are complicit in perpetuating its unrelenting grip on our societies; how it dictates our schedules; how it impacts our well-being. Transformation happens through awareness, through education, and

through resistance. We are on a wrong path, as a culture, as academics, as teacher-students, as citizens, as human beings – we need to find a new and better way to live, so that we may find a new and better way to teach; a new and better way of being.

Though scholars often point to the issue of class when criticizing capitalism, and this is an extremely important endeavor, I think we must engage with issues around labor beyond the distribution of wealth and income inequality. More than just a traditional discussion around class, I believe we need to raise awareness around the ways in which we orient towards time and labor and recognize that what we deem normal is only normal because we allow it to be. We need to raise our collective consciousness so that we can make changes in the way we organize our day-to-day existence. As critical pedagogues, that may concretely translate into conversations with students about their work load. We must also understand that with increasing costs of education, going to college isn't the romanticized experience we may envision it to be. What demands are made of a student's time from their college classes? How many are they forced to take due to financial constraints? How much are they working on the side, or are they raising kids? This might mean having conversations in the classroom about the ways in which we communicate about time, work and stress levels. We may also have conversations about what it means to achieve well-being, how we might do that, and what might stand in the way.

I believe we can raise awareness about this element of capitalism in a neoliberal society through dialogue with one another, and through questioning together what we deem normal. As teachers we may ask how we can reasonably accommodate our classes to ensure some balance in student workload - if only from this one class we are in together. As academics who are aware of the constraints of the system we operate in, it is hard to envision hope for change. As we see neoliberal politics and capitalist consumer culture manifest in all aspects of lives, it may feel

impossible to overturn that system. Do we have the power to enact lasting change? As pedagogues? As members of society? Giroux (2004) writes:

> Civic engagement seems irrelevant in light of the growing power of multinational corporations to privatize public space and time. We have less time – and fewer civic spaces – for experiencing ourselves as political agents. Market values replace social values. Power has become disconnected from issues of equity, social justice, and civic responsibility. (p. 38)

However, Giroux continues his argument, when something doesn't feel right, it takes struggle to manifest change. Giroux advocates for an "educated hope" – a hope that radically opposes systems of oppression because that is our moral responsibility. Hope thus becomes a "discourse of critique and social transformation. Hope makes the leap for us between *critical education,* which tells is what must be changed; *political agency,* which gives us the means to make change; and *concrete struggles* through which change happens" (Giroux, 2004, p. 38, italics in original). Hope is the necessary element for any social justice oriented pedagogy because without it, all things stagnate. It is from that hope that we can imagine something different and it is from an ethic of care that we feel the urgency of doing so.

Raising our collective consciousness and imagination to hopefully and critically examine our habits as a society is the only way to achieve change. As employees in the academy, we are neither immune nor innocent spectators in this cultural current of neoliberal capitalism. That means we have work to do to dismantle the oppressive systems we often normalize, take for granted, or refrain from even recognizing. A critical pedagogy that is social justice oriented seeks the well-being of all people in our societies. That means we also must remain vigilant about how we orient towards time, and how the commodification of time – deeply entrenched in U.S.

American culture (Weber, 1958) – dictates how we live and do work. It means we have to critically examine the ways in which we normalize stress, and what increasing clock-time-demands we consent to *and* distribute to others. As teachers and academics who adhere to a critical communication pedagogy, that means we have to remain reflexive about the ways in which we might adhere to problematic work-habits, what we expect of our students, and what language we use when engaging in discourse around work-load, stress, and time-management. It means we broaden our ethic of care to include conversations around stress and time-management and the insidious nature of neoliberal capitalism and how we are oppressed by this system as well as complicit in perpetuating its power. It also means we take care of ourselves so that we may care about others in meaningful ways. Well-being is a social good, and the ultimate goal of social justice work. As critical communication pedagogues, we are dedicated to social justice and the well-being of our students and ourselves. It is up to us to challenge anything and everything that stands in the way of such well-being.

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